

CHICAGO DEFENDER

‘Empire’ creating 250 jobs, strengthening Illinois’ growing film industry

By Chicago Defender Staff
Published December 9, 2014

CHICAGO – Governor Pat Quinn visited Monday the set of the new TV drama “Empire” to welcome the series to Illinois. Created by Lee Daniels and Danny Strong for Twentieth Century Fox Television, “Empire” is filmed in Chicago and employs about 250 Illinois workers. The event is part of Quinn’s agenda to create jobs and drive Illinois’ economy forward.

“Thanks to the investment we made to build Cinespace Studios, Illinois is now the top destination outside Hollywood for the next summer blockbuster or TV series,” Quinn said in a news release. “Empire is the latest major production to come to Illinois, creating hundreds of good jobs and generating millions of dollars in economic investment.”

Since 2009, Illinois’ film industry has driven more than \$1.2 billion in economic growth, including roughly \$600 million in wages for Illinois workers. “Empire” is spending \$25 million in 2014 to shoot its first 12 episodes. Of that amount, about half will go directly to Illinois wages. The production is using 75 Illinois vendors.

“Empire” is being filmed at the Cinespace Chicago Film Studios on the city’s near West side. The Cinespace facility was constructed with \$5 million from Quinn’s Illinois Jobs Now! capital construction program in May of 2011, coupled with a large private investment, and currently stands as the largest soundstage in the United States outside of Hollywood.

Since its opening in 2011, revenue to the state from the film industry has grown substantially. In 2013, the industry generated an estimated \$358 million in spending, a record that nearly doubled the prior all-time high set in 2012. In 2013, the industry supported more than 4,200 full-time equivalent jobs in Illinois.

The Cinespace studio has been home to major productions such as TV series “Chicago Fire,” “Chicago P.D.” and “Boss,” as well as blockbuster studio films such as “Transformers” and “Divergent.”

“The tremendous growth in Illinois’ film industry was made possible by our film tax credits, talented crews, iconic shooting locations and world-class sound stages and studios,” Illinois Film Office Managing Director Betsy Steinberg said. “All of this stems

from Governor Quinn's commitment to fostering a thriving film and television industry in Illinois."

The film office, part of the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, actively promotes the state as an ideal location for video productions. The office also administers the Illinois Film Tax Credit. Quinn signed a 10-year extension of the credit in 2011, which has led to more productions throughout the state. The 30 percent tax credit is awarded to filmmakers for money spent on Illinois goods and services, including wages paid to Illinois residents.

"Empire" is a hip-hop family drama and is scheduled to premiere on Jan. 7, 2015.